WHAT IS CLAIMED:

1. A device for clamping and ablating cardiac tissue comprising:

a first handle member;

a second handle member;

first and second mating jaw members associated with the first and second handle members, respectively, the jaw members being movable by the handle members between a first open position and a second clamped position in which the spacing between the jaw members is substantially constant;

a first elongated electrode extending along the first jaw member;

a second elongated electrode extending along the second jaw member;

the first and second electrodes being adapted to be connected to an RF energy source so that, when activated, the first and second electrodes are of opposite polarity.

2. The device of claim 1 wherein the parallel jaw members spaced apart between approximately 1 to 15 mm when in the clamped position.

3. A tissue grasping apparatus comprising:

first and second parallel grasping jaws, the grasping jaws being relatively moveable between open and closed positions, the spacing between the jaw members being substantially constant when in the closed position; each jaw including an elongated electrode and a clamping surface in face-to-face relation with the electrode and clamping surface of the other jaw; the face-to-face electrodes being of opposite polarity and connectible to a power source for providing an electrical current between the electrodes.

4. The apparatus of claim 3 wherein the parallel grasping jaws spaced apart between approximately 1 to 15 mm when in the closed position.

5. The apparatus of claim 3 wherein the clamping surfaces of the jaws are an insulating material.